

**Minutes**  
**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**May 28, 2013 at 7:00 pm**

**Members present:**

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman  
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman  
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary

**Staff present:**

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office  
Charles M. Jones, Department of Public Works

**Others present:**

Gregg A. Bogia, Bogia Engineering Inc.  
Theodore Bassano, Reading Area Community College  
Daniel H. Laudenslayer, Tarson LLC  
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the May meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the May 28th agenda. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the May agenda.

**§303.a.1 review-campus planning and public street changes (Reading Area Community College) [0:00.19]**

Mr. Bogia introduced a concept plan for their preferred changes in the traffic circulation in and around the Community College campus. He said they hope to increase pedestrian safety, while projecting a friendlier and “greener” atmosphere. It includes enhancements to the walkways and street crossings. A concrete transition at the (southwest) corner of Penn and 2nd Street, dubbed “the bunker”, would be replaced by a more-standard sidewalk and stair, in an attempt at a more traditional and inviting entry to the campus. The driveway, affront Berks Hall and opposite Cherry Street, would be closed, eliminating the frequent turning movements that tend to disrupt traffic coming off the Penn Street Bridge. Franklin Street, on the College’s (100 block) side of South 2nd Street, would be closed and remade as a pedestrian element, mitigating the frustrations and hazards of that intersection. He committed to meeting the emergency access considerations, including its width and load capacity. A boulevard design is intended for the reopened Front and Chestnut Streets route that would replace Franklin Street. He disclaimed the design as *preliminary*, offered only to show the preferred direction before committing to more-specific engineering. Mr. Raffaelli recalled traffic signals, originally installed at the South 2nd and Franklin intersection and later removed. Mr. Bogia didn’t know its history, but noted the long distance for pedestrian crossing, the trucks, and traffic often aligned in the wrong lanes. He speculated that the removal of signals may have had something to do with ‘signal warrants’ found from a previous traffic study, doubting that their proposed changes would result in ‘warranting’ a signal where it is currently not. He acknowledged that new studies would be conducted as part of designing the proposed alterations. Mr. Miller noted his frequent travel in the area, and supported the concept. He thought it difficult to anticipate every consequence of the change, but felt the current situation a problem with or without the pedestrians. He said the driveway closure would help, either way, and asked for follow-up information as the design progresses, including the consent of the other affected landowners. He liked the boulevard concept, but wondered about the width available on Front Street. Mr. Burket questioned the changes envisioned directly beneath the bridge overpass. Mr. Bogia again cited the conceptual scope of the plan, and promised more definitive information to come. Asked if anything was planned as far north as North 2nd and Court (or Washington) Streets, Mr. Bogia said not within the scope of the Community College’s project. He went on to briefly describe a pending plan for a new parking lot, being prepared by another consultant, for the former Reading Eagle property south of Chestnut Street. Mr. Bassano described it all as steps toward realizing the campus master plan, arranging for potential future buildings in the campus center while maintaining adequate parking at the periphery. He said applications will be made for additional capital-improvement funding. Mr. Lauter agreed that the concept would benefit the College, but wanted to know more about the impacts to the neighboring businesses and the effects on other streets and intersections. He contrasted the ‘industrial collector’ design of the riverfront streets, prevailing since the post-flood (Hurricane Agnes) urban renewal of the 1970s, with the needs of the more-recent land-use trends. Mr. Miller suggested those answers would depend on the reach of the traffic-impact studies.

**219 Buttonwood Land Development (Dollar General) – final land development plan [0:24.36]**

Mr. Bogia reported that the erosion and sedimentation controls had been approved since the April presentation, including the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. He hoped to have

the final plan approved and endorsed. Mr. Miller indicated his satisfaction.

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the Dollar General final plan. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to grant final approval to the 219 Buttonwood Land Development plan.

**Resolution #15-2013**

Iglesia Cristiana – final land development plan [0:25.48]

Mr. Laudenslayer explained the delay in completing the plan for the church addition. He said he had addressed some of the more-minor review comments, and secured the Berks County Conservation District's approval, but questions remain regarding possible sanitary-sewer connections to Laurel and South Streets, and a possible water valve in Laurel Street. He said his 'OneCall' inquiry hadn't been answered by the City. A water connection was found from a meter in South Street. He said he had presented sewer-loading information satisfactory to the Department of Public Works. He claimed to be waiting on the architect for more detail on the fire-suppression system. He asked about the required form of the municipal-improvements escrow, explaining that the church is in a fund-raising stage and wouldn't be able to proceed immediately upon approval. He said he'd like to complete the planning process in a way that prevents the need for indefinite extension requests. Mr. Miller offered two scenarios: a verbal approval and reaffirmation later, or, preferably, a formal agreement acceptable to the Law Department, providing the framework and estimated costs and promising the security before construction. The latter would allow the plan to be recorded in the meantime. Mr. Laudenslayer said he hoped to finish that way by the June meeting. Mr. Miller recommended the Commission table the plan, if the applicant offered an additional review period. Mr. Laudenslayer agreed, and requested the extension.

Mr. Burket moved to accept the 30-day review extension, based on the request of the applicant's surveyor, and table the final plan. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to extend its review of the Iglesia Cristiana plan by 30 days, per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code's time limits (§508.3) for plan review.

**Resolution #16-2013**

**Other business:**

§207 election-2013 Planning Commission office holders [0:39.38]

Mr. Lauter, leading a 'nomination committee' and having previously consulted the other members, nominated the existing officers for another year in their existing capacities.

- Chairman - Ermete J. Raffaelli
- Vice Chairman - Brian J. Burket
- Secretary - Michael E. Lauter
- Assistant Secretary - Wayne Jonas Bealer

Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to re-elect the current officers to their current offices.

**Resolution #17-2013**

review the draft April 23, 2013 meeting minutes [0:40.49]

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the April meeting minutes, subject to the consideration of absent members.

Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the April 23rd meeting minutes.

**Resolution #18-2013**

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the May meeting. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the May 28th meeting. – 7:43p